

Serial No.: 10/723,682
Amdt. Dated: January 09 2007
Reply to Office action of November 06 2006

140323-1

REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 1 to 4, 6 to 26, 28, and 29 were rejected. Claims 5 and 27 were indicated by the Examiner to constitute allowable subject matter if rewritten in independent form. By this Response, claims 1, 16, 20, 21, and 28 are amended. Claims 5 and 27 have been cancelled. Claims 1 to 4, 6 to 26, 28, and 29 are pending. Reconsideration and allowance of all pending claims are requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1 to 4, 6 to 26, 28 and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 (b) in view of U.S. Patent 5,875,170 (Tompkin et al., the '170 patent). Claims 1, 16, 20 and 28 have been amended to include the limitations of claim 5. Claim 21 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 27. Claims 5 and 27 have been cancelled. Though the Applicants do not concede the correctness of the claim rejections, the Applicants have proposed the claim amendments herein in order to expedite allowance of that portion of the claimed subject matter considered by the Examiner to be allowable at this stage in the prosecution. The Applicants have cancelled claims 5 and 27 but reserve a right to file a continuation.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (b).

Allowable Subject Matter And Allowed Claims

Claims 5 and 27 were objected to as being dependent upon rejected base claims, but were deemed allowable if written in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants appreciate this indication of allowable subject matter. Accordingly claim 1, 16, 20 and 28 have been amended to include the limitations of claim 5, and claim 21 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 27. Additional support for these amendments may be found, *inter alia*, in paragraphs [0037] and [0045] of the specification.

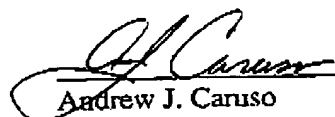
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In view of the remarks and amendments set forth above, the Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1 to 4, 6 to 26, 28 and 29 in the patent application are in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are respectfully requested.

Should the examiner believe that anything further is needed to place the application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,


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